THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S TALE

MY STORY BEGINS IN A COURTROOM, CROWDED WITH THE CURIOUS WHO HAVE COME TO WATCH A CONVICTED MURDERER BE SENTENCED TO DEATH...

...AND IT IS THE JUDGMENT OF THIS COURT, JAMES COOPER, THAT YOU BE SENT TO STATE PRISON, AND THERE BE ELECTROCUTED ON THE NIGHT OF NOVEMBER 7TH... AND MAY THE LORD HAVE MERCY ON YOUR SOUL!

NO... NO!

I'VE BEEN *FRAMED!* YOU'RE ALL *AGAINST* ME! BUT... *I'LL GET EVEN!* I'LL COME *BACK*... AND I'LL *GET YOU*... *ALL* OF YOU! I'LL HAVE *REVENGE!* *YOU'LL SEE!* I...

LET'S GO, COOPER!

THE EVENING PAPERS CARRIED BLARING HEADLINES OF JAMES COOPER'S THREAT...

EVENING BUG

CONVICTED MURDERER SWEARS REVENGE!!

TO RETURN FROM THE DEAD!

JURY MEMBERS AMUSED!

COOPER TO DIE NIGHT OF NOV.7TH.

CONVICTED MAN

BUT A FEW NIGHTS LATER, IN A RAMSHACKLED HOUSE OUTSIDE OF TOWN...

FOR THE *RIGHT PRICE*, GENTLEMEN, I CAN *BRING* JAMES COOPER BACK FROM THE *DEAD*... *REVIVE* HIM *AFTER* HE HAS BEEN *ELECTROCUTED!*

WHAT? YOU CAN... MAKE HIM *LIVE* AGAIN?

THAT IS *CORRECT!* I HAVE BEEN EXPERIMENTING ON ELECTROCUTION DEATHS FOR MANY YEARS, AND HAVE BEEN *SUCCESSFUL* WITH *ANIMALS!* I HAVE LONGED TO EXPERIMENT ON A HUMAN... THAT IS WHY I'VE CONTACTED YOU!

AND SO... A FEW DAYS BEFORE JAMES COOPER WAS TO DIE IN THE ELECTRIC CHAIR... HE HAD A VISITOR IN THE DEATH HOUSE...

WHAT DO YOU THINK, JIMMY? WANT TO CHANCE IT?

OF COURSE, YOU FOOL! WHAT HAVE I GOT TO *LOSE!* PAY HIM HIS MONEY!

THE DEAL WAS MADE, AND ON THE NIGHT OF NOVEMBER 7TH, AT THE APPOINTED HOUR...

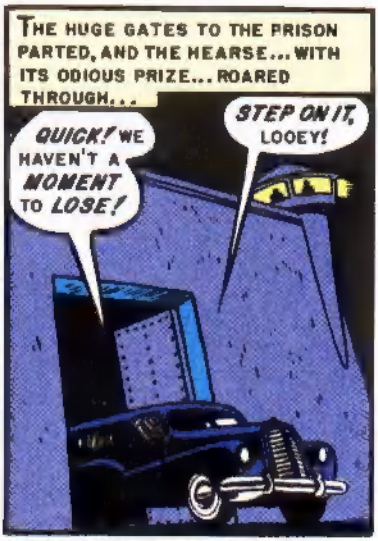
ALL RIGHT, COOPER! LET'S GO!

SURE, GUARD! SURE!

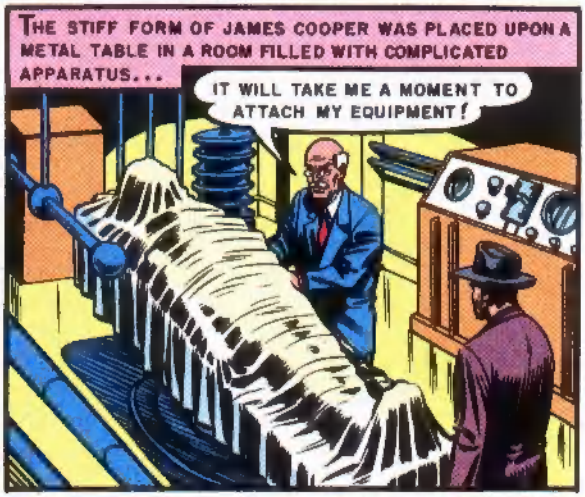
DOWN THE LONG CORRIDOR TO THE LITTLE GREEN DOOR, THE CONVICTED MAN... FLANKED BY THE WARDEN AND A GUARD... SLOWLY MADE HIS WAY...DOWN THE "LAST MILE"...
THE HEAVY DOOR SWUNG OPEN! INSIDE, SAT REPORTERS ASSIGNED TO COVER THE EXECUTION...
LOOK, JOE! THE JERK'S SMILING!
WAIT! HE'LL CRACK! THEY ALWAYS DO!
OUTSIDE THE DARK GREY WALLS, IN THE PRISON YARD, STOOD A BLACK HEARSE! A FACE PEERED OUT FROM BEHIND DRAWN CURTAINS...
WHILE WITHIN, THE PRISONER WAS BEING STRAPPED INTO THE LETHAL CHAIR...
HE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE AFRAID!
I DON'T GET IT!
ELECTRODES WERE FASTENED INTO PLACE...
ALL SET, WARDEN!
ALL RIGHT, MR. EXECUTIONER!
A SMALL MAN STEPPED TO A CONTROL PANEL AND PULLED A SWITCH...
THE STENCH OF BURNING FLESH AND SINGED HAIR FILLED THE ROOM AS THE LIGHTS DIMMED! AFTER A FEW MOMENTS, A DOCTOR STEPPED FORWARD AND PLACED HIS STETHOSCOPE ON JAMES COOPER'S HEART...
THIS MAN IS DEAD!

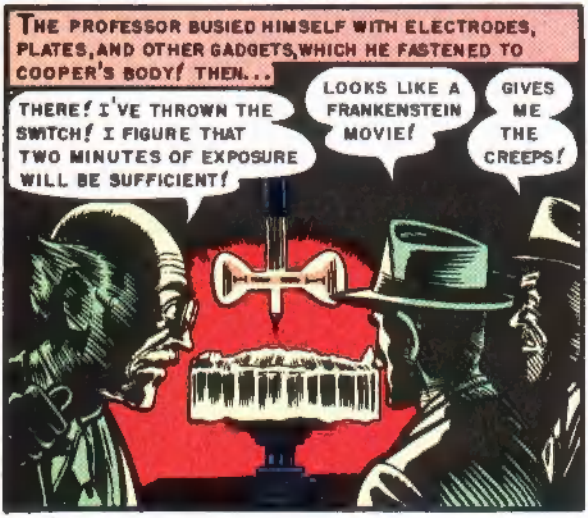
A GUARD STEPPED FORWARD...
HIS RELATIVES ARE HERE TO CLAIM HIS BODY, SIR!
THEY MAY COME IN!

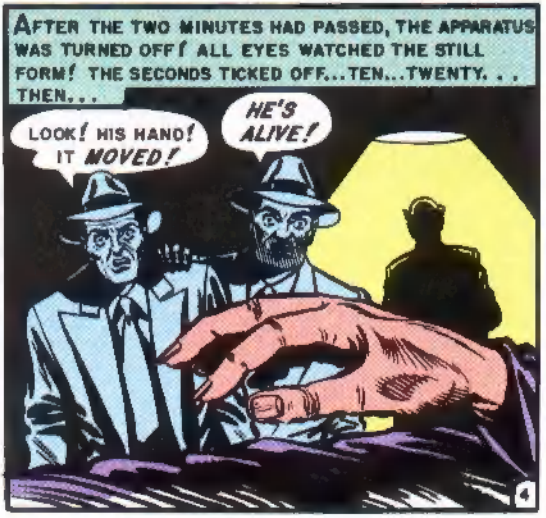
THE DOORS TO THE BLACK HEARSE SWUNG OPEN, AND THE COVERED BODY OF JAMES COOPER WAS LIFTED IN...
HURRY!
OKAY, PROF!


THE HUGE GATES TO THE PRISON PARTED, AND THE HEARSE... WITH ITS ODIOUS PRIZE... ROARED THROUGH...
QUICK! WE HAVEN'T A MOMENT TO LOSE!
STEP ON IT, LOOEY!

IN A MATTER OF MINUTES, THE BLACK CAR PULLED UP BEFORE THE PROFESSOR'S HOUSE...
CAREFUL! I'VE GIVEN HIM THREE HYPODERMICS! DO NOT JAR HIM!
DON'T WORRY, PROF! WE'LL HANDLE HIM LIKE A BABY!

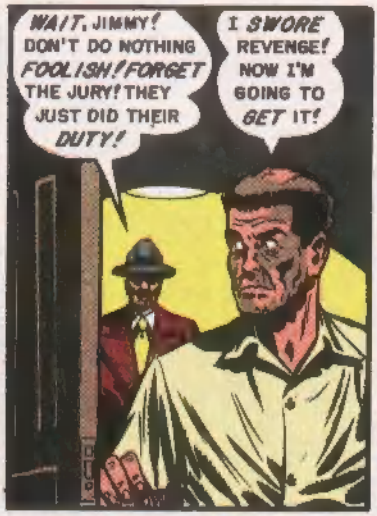

THE STIFF FORM OF JAMES COOPER WAS PLACED UPON A METAL TABLE IN A ROOM FILLED WITH COMPLICATED APPARATUS...
IT WILL TAKE ME A MOMENT TO ATTACH MY EQUIPMENT!


THE PROFESSOR BUSIED HIMSELF WITH ELECTRODES, PLATES, AND OTHER GADGETS, WHICH HE FASTENED TO COOPER'S BODY! THEN...
THERE! I'VE THROWN THE SWITCH! I FIGURE THAT TWO MINUTES OF EXPOSURE WILL BE SUFFICIENT!
LOOKS LIKE A FRANKENSTEIN MOVIE!
GIVES ME THE CREEPS!

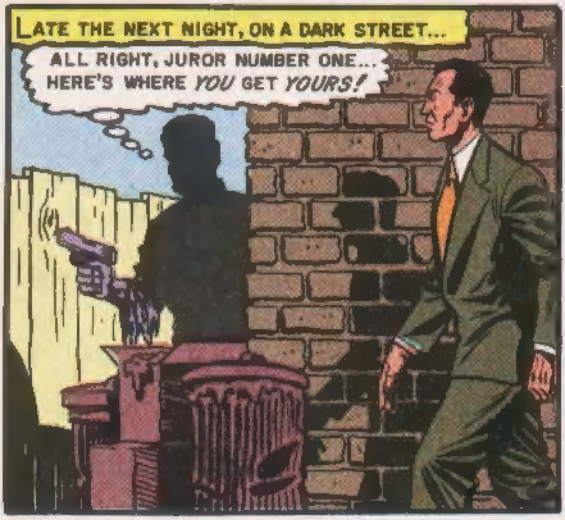

AFTER THE TWO MINUTES HAD PASSED, THE APPARATUS WAS TURNED OFF! ALL EYES WATCHED THE STILL FORM! THE SECONDS TICKED OFF... TEN... TWENTY... THEN...
LOOK! HIS HAND! IT MOVED!
HE'S ALIVE!

SLOWLY THE DRAPED FIGURE STIRRED...THEN SAT UP! THE SHEET FELL AWAY AND...
CRIPES! HIS FLESH IS ALL BURNED!
CERTAINLY! HE HAS BEEN SUBJECTED TO A VERY HIGH AMPERAGE CHARGE!
HE LOOKS... HORRIBLE!
DO NOT WORRY! WITH PROPER MEDICATION, HE WILL HEAL!
WHA... WHAT... HAPPENED?
TAKE IT EASY, JIMMY! YOU'VE HAD A ROUGH TIME!
I...I REMEMBER, NOW! THE CHAIR... I WAS ELECTROCUTED!
THIS IS THE PROFESSOR I WAS TELLING YOU ABOUT, JIMMY! HE REVIVED YOU!
GIVE ME A GUN!
WHA...?
YOU HEARD ME! GIVE ME A GUN!
NO! DON'T!
DON'T GIVE HIM ANYTHING UNTIL I'VE HAD TIME TO DETERMINE WHETHER HIS BRAIN HAS BEEN DAMAGED!
LOOEY! YOU HEARD ME!
SURE, BOSS! SURE! HERE!
THANKS FOR THE FAVOR, PROF! HERE'S MY PAYOFF!
JIMMY! DON'T! YOU...

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE THAT, JIMMY! HE WAS GONNA FIX UP YOUR BURNS!
DON'T NEED IT! NOW... I'M GONNA GET THAT JURY!


WAIT, JIMMY! DON'T DO NOTHING FOOLISH! FORGET THE JURY! THEY JUST DID THEIR DUTY!
I SWORE REVENGE! NOW I'M GOING TO GET IT!

HE...HE'S DIFFERENT! HE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE ALL THERE!
MAYBE...WHAT THE PROF SAID... ABOUT HIS BRAIN BEING DAMAGED...


LATE THE NEXT NIGHT, ON A DARK STREET...
ALL RIGHT, JUROR NUMBER ONE... HERE'S WHERE YOU GET YOURS!

WHA..? WHO IS IT? I...NO...NO! COOPER...

AND THE NEXT MORNING...
THE MORNING STAR—COMET—PRESS
JUROR IN COOPER CASE FOUND MURDERED! FEARED VICTIM OF GANGLAND RETALIATION...
STRANGE MARKS ON THROAT SAID TO BE BURNED FLESH PRINTS!

MEANWHILE, AT THE COOPER GANG'S HIDE-OUT...
IT'S THE BOSS!
GOOD LORD! LOOK AT HIM!
HE LOOKS WORSE THAN YESTERDAY!
WHAT ARE YOU STARING AT?

IT WAS TRUE! JAMES COOPER'S BURNED AND SEARED BODY *DID* LOOK WORSE! IT SEEMED TO BE...*ROTTING!*

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE *DONE* IT, JIMMY! THEY'VE TURNED THE *HEAT* ON...

WHO CARES! I'LL *GET* THEM! *EVERY LAST ONE* OF THEM!

AGAIN THAT NIGHT, JAMES COOPER STALKED A VICTIM...

THAT TAKES CARE OF *YOU*, JUROR NUMBER TWO!

AND THE PAPERS PLAYED IT UP...

TAR NEWS

SECOND JUROR FOUND MURDERED!

POLICE ROUNDING UP EVERY KNOWN MEMBER OF COOPER GANG!

COURTROOM PROMISE TO RETURN IS RECALLED!

THE POLICE GRILLED SUSPECT AFTER SUSPECT! MEANWHILE THE OTHER JURORS WERE GIVEN POLICE PROTECTION...

ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! I'LL TALK... I'LL TALK! IT'S *COOPER! HE'S ALIVE!*

YOU'RE *LYING!*

YEAH? THEN WHY DON'T YOU LOOK IN HIS GRAVE FOR HIS BODY!

HOGAN! GET THE NECESSARY PAPERS! WE'LL TAKE THIS STOOLIE'S SUGGESTION!

BY COURT ORDER, THE GRAVE OF JAMES COOPER WAS OPENED...

OKAY, BOYS! PRY OPEN THE COFFIN!

IT...IT'S *EMPTY!*

HE *IS* ALIVE!

IT *CAN'T* BE! I WOULDN'T BELIEVE IF I HADN'T SEEN IT WITH MY OWN EYES!

THAT NIGHT, JAMES COOPER AGAIN ROAMED THE CITY, BEING CAREFUL TO KEEP OUT OF SIGHT! HE WAS A GHASTLY THING TO SEE! HIS FLESH HAD ALMOST COMPLETELY DECAYED FROM HIS BODY!

WHILE THE COPS ARE GUARDING THE JURORS, I'LL GET THE JUDGE THAT SENTENCED ME...

HIS HIDEOUS FACE PEERED INTO THE STUDY OF JUDGE WARREN HAWLEY...

GOOD! HE'S ALONE!

SLOWLY HE OPENED THE FRENCH DOORS AND ENTERED...

COOPER! GOOD LORD! WHAT... WHAT YOU *LOOK* LIKE...

I...I'VE COME TO... TO KILL YOU... JUDGE!

THE JUDGE SNATCHED A POKER FROM THE NEARBY FIREPLACE...AND AS COOPER ADVANCED TOWARD HIM...

KEEP AWAY, COOPER... *KEEP AWAY!* ALL RIGHT! YOU *FORCE ME TO...*

YAAAAAAH!

THE BLOW FROM THE HEAVY IRON POKER CAUGHT COOPER ACROSS THE FACE, AND THE REMAINING FLESH FELL AWAY!...THEN...

HE...HE COLLAPSED INTO A HEAP OF BONES... AND DECAYED ROT!

LATER, AFTER THE CORONER HAD EXAMINED COOPER'S REMAINS...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF IT, JUDGE! YOU SAY HE *TALKED* AND *WALKED?* ACCORDING TO MY TESTS, HE'S BEEN *DEAD* SINCE *NOVEMBER 7TH!*

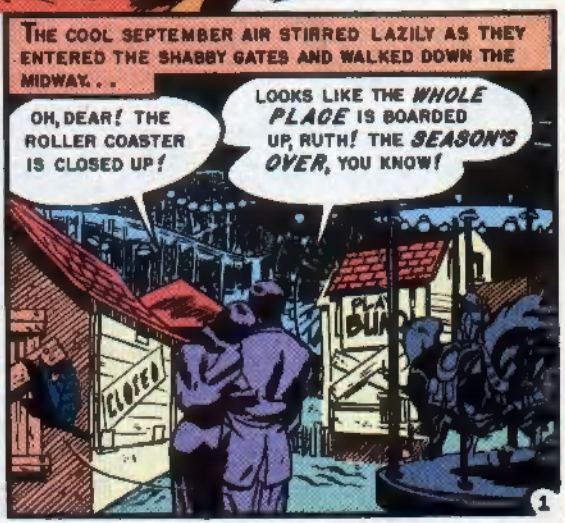
DEAD? BUT, HE *LIVED...* I *SAW* HIM...

YES, JUDGE! COOPER *LIVED!* AT LEAST HE MOVED...AND TALKED! BUT HE WAS A LIVING *CORPSE!* AND HIS BODY *CONTINUED TO DECAY,* AS *ALL* DEAD BODIES DO! SOON, HE HAD DECAYED TO SUCH A POINT THAT EVEN THE 'LIFE' THAT THE POOR OLD PROFESSOR HAD GIVEN HIM SLIPPED AWAY! TOO BAD, THOUGH! HE WAS GETTING TO LOOK *REAL PRETTY!* DIDN'T *YOU* THINK SO? WELL... FOR MORE SPINE-TINGLING TALES, *READ ON...* IF YOU DARE! JUST DON'T *GO TO PIECES* LIKE POOR OLD JIMMY!

THIS IS THE TALE OF TWO PEOPLE WHO VISITED AN AMUSEMENT PARK...AND WERE *NOT* AMUSED! I CALL IT...

TERROR RIDE!

by Woody.



GEORGE AND RUTH STOOD ALONE ON THE DESERTED MIDWAY...
GEE! I GUESS WE MIGHT AS WELL LEAVE!
YEAH! TOO BAD!
SUDDENLY...
WHAT'S THAT, RUTH!
SOUNDS LIKE WATER SPLASHING!
OH LOOK, GEORGE! HOW QUAINT!
AN OLD MILL RIDE... WITH A WATER-WHEEL!
I'M GLAD AT LEAST ONE RIDE IS OPEN! LET'S TRY IT!
I...I DON'T KNOW, GEORGE! IT'S ALWAYS SO DARK IN THOSE THINGS...
TICKETS
MMMM! WHAT BETTER PLACE TO TAKE MY NEW BRIDE THAN ON A DARK BOAT RIDE!
OH, GEORGE! STOP...
HOW MANY, PLEASE?
TWO! AREN'T VERY BUSY, ARE YOU?
NO! NOT MANY PEOPLE COME HERE THIS TIME OF YEAR! ALL RIGHT... TAKE THE NEXT BOAT!
COMFORTABLE, HONEY?
SNUG AS A BUG...
HAVE A PLEASANT TRIP, FOLKS!

THE BOAT WITH GEORGE AND RUTH MOVED SLOWLY TOWARD THE YAWNING BLACK MOUTH OF THE TUNNEL...

THIS LOOKS LIKE IT'S GOING TO BE *FUN*...

PLEASE, GEORGE! THE MAN WILL *HEAR* YOU...

AND THEN...

OOOOH! IT'S DARK!

...THE *DARKER* THE *BETTER!*

YOU'RE *FRESH*, GEORGE ARNOLD!

DID YOU FORGET WHO YOU JUST *MARRIED* TODAY, MRS. ARNOLD? NOW GIMME A...

SUDDENLY, A LIGHT FLASHES ON...

WHAT THE...?

YIIIIII!

OH, IT'S JUST ONE OF THOSE *WAX DISPLAYS* THEY HAVE IN THESE RIDES!

BUT... IT LOOKS... SO *REAL!*

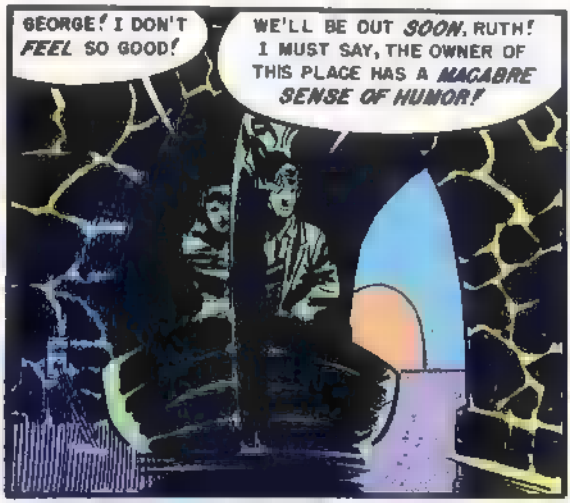
THE BOAT MOVES SLOWLY FORWARD, AND THE DISPLAY DARKENS AGAIN...

THOSE WAX FIGURES, WHEN THEY'RE DONE BY AN EXPERT, ALWAYS *DO* LOOK REAL! NOW, WHERE *WERE* WE?

YOU WERE ABOUT TO GIVE ME A...

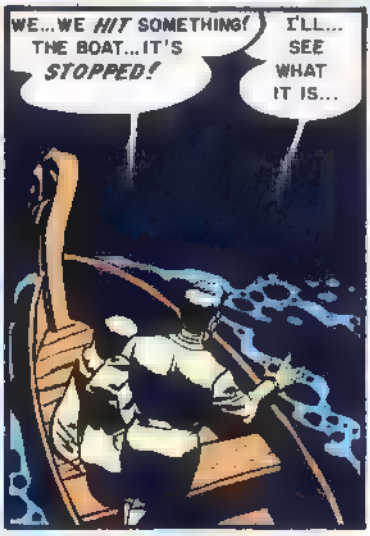
HOW *HORRIBLE!*

SAY! THIS ISN'T *FUNNY* ANY MORE! THESE DISPLAYS ARE... *REVOLTING!*


GEORGE! I DON'T FEEL SO GOOD!
WE'LL BE OUT SOON, RUTH! I MUST SAY, THE OWNER OF THIS PLACE HAS A MACABRE SENSE OF HUMOR!

LOOK, GEORGE! ANOTHER ONE...
UGH! THEY CERTAINLY DO LOOK REAL...THAT DECAPITATED CORPSE...AND THE DRIED BLOOD!

I'M CLOSING MY EYES! I'M NOT GOING TO LOOK ANY MORE!
I DON'T BLAME YOU! THEY'RE ALL PRETTY DISGUSTING! WE...


WE...WE HIT SOMETHING! THE BOAT...IT'S STOPPED!
I'LL... SEE WHAT IT IS...

GEORGE MOVED TO THE FRONT OF THE BOAT AND GROPED INTO THE INKY BLACKNESS...
IT'S...SOMETHING SOFT... IN THE WATER! I... I'LL LIGHT MY CIGARETTE LIGHTER...

GOOD LORD!
IT...IT'S A BODY!

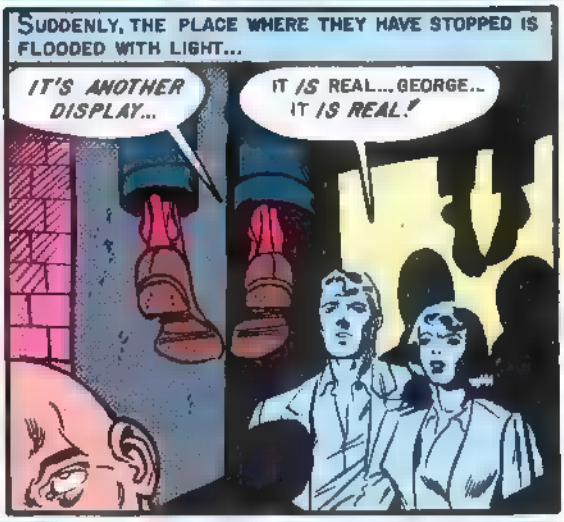
GEORGE...SOB...I WANT TO GET...SOB...OUT OF HERE...
I...CAN'T MOVE THE BOAT! IT'S...JAMMED ON THIS...CORPSE! WE'LL HAVE TO WADE THE REST OF THE WAY...

AS THE FRIGHTENED COUPLE SPLASHED THROUGH THE BLACK TUNNEL...
GREAT SCOTT! I JUST THOUGHT OF SOMETHING, RUTH!
WHAT?

THAT CORPSE WAS REAL! MAYBE THE DISPLAYS WERE REAL TOO!
OH, NO... NO!

ON THROUGH THE MURKY DARKNESS THEY WADED...
WE'LL BE OUT SOON!
I...GASP... I'M TIRED! I'VE GOT TO REST, GEORGE!

HERE! HERE'S A PLACE TO SIT DOWN!
THANK GOODNESS! I'M ABOUT READY TO...

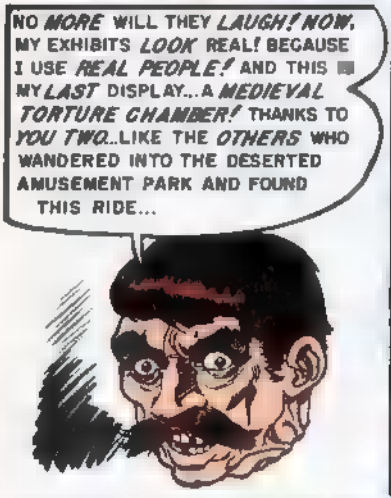

SUDDENLY, THE PLACE WHERE THEY HAVE STOPPED IS FLOODED WITH LIGHT...
IT'S ANOTHER DISPLAY...
IT IS REAL...GEORGE... IT IS REAL!

FEAR AND TERROR CLUTCHED AT THEIR HEARTS AS GEORGE AND RUTH RUSHED FROM THE HORRIBLE SCENE FURTHER INTO THE INKY GLOOM...
HERE! HERE'S AN EMPTY DISPLAY! YOU CAN REST HERE!
IT LOOKS...LIKE SOME KIND OF TORTURE CHAMBER...

AS SOON AS YOU CATCH YOUR BREATH, WE'LL GET OUT OF HERE, RUTH!
THE OWNER...HE MUST BE A MADMAN! A HOMICIDAL MANIAC...

YOU DIDN'T LAUGH AT MY EXHIBITS, DID YOU?
GEORGE! IT'S... HIM!
LOOK AT HIS EYES... HE IS MAD!

ALL SUMMER THEY LAUGHED AT MY EXHIBITS, THE FOOLS! THEY SAID MY WAX DUMMYS DIDN'T LOOK REAL! NOW I CAN SHOW THEM! HEH-HEH...
RUTH, GET READY TO MAKE A BREAK FOR IT!

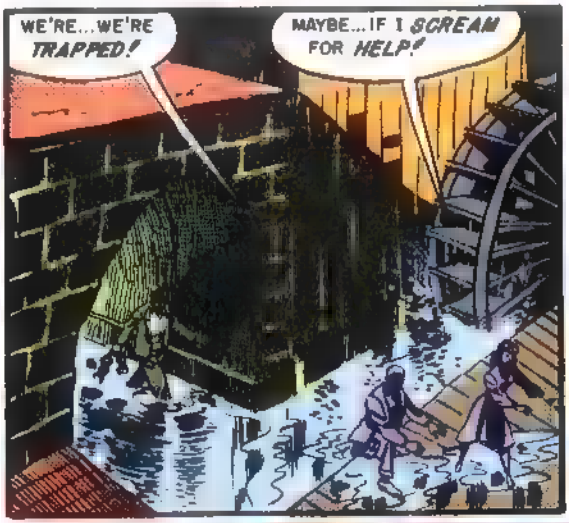

NO MORE WILL THEY LAUGH! NOW, MY EXHIBITS LOOK REAL! BECAUSE I USE REAL PEOPLE! AND THIS MY LAST DISPLAY... A MEDIEVAL TORTURE CHAMBER! THANKS TO YOU TWO... LIKE THE OTHERS WHO WANDERED INTO THE DESERTED AMUSEMENT PARK AND FOUND THIS RIDE...

...I WILL BE ABLE TO FINISH IT! THERE'S NO USE RUNNING... YOU CAN'T GET OUT! THE EXIT IS CLOSED... AND LOCKED!

RUN, RUTH! RUN!
HAH-HAH! I'LL GET YOU... NEVER FEAR...

THOSE... GASP... SHACKLES HE'S CARRYING... GASP! HE WANTS TO PUT US ON THAT STRETCH RACK! GASP!
GEORGE... HE'S COMING AFTER US...

THERE, GEORGE... THE END OF THE TUNNEL...
AND THE EXIT... IT IS LOCKED!

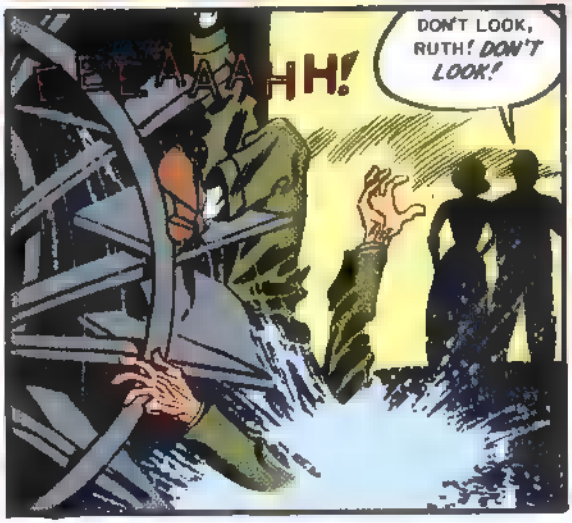

WE'RE...WE'RE TRAPPED!
MAYBE...IF I SCREAM FOR HELP!

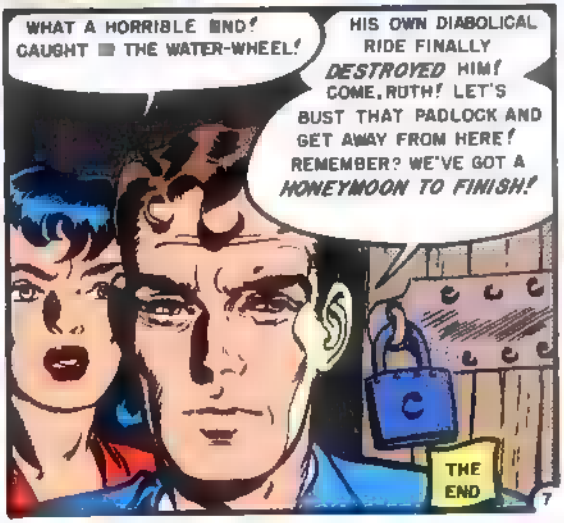
THERE'S NO USE CALLING! NO ONE WILL HEAR YOU! THE PARK IS DESERTED...
KEEP AWAY, YOU CRAZY IDIOT!

CRAZY? YOU'LL SEE IF I'M CRAZY...

THE MANIACAL OWNER...HIS EYES BURNING...LUNGES AT THE COWERING PAIR...
I'M A GENIUS...I CREATE REALISTIC...

YAH!
GEORGE! HE SLIPPED ON THE WET BOARDS...

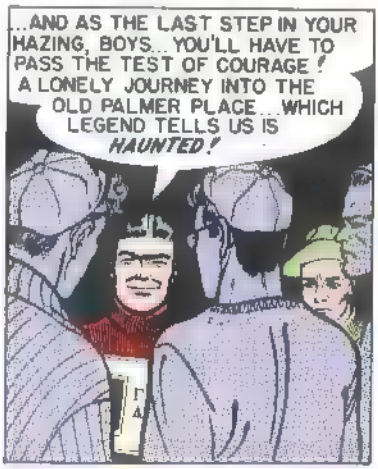

EEEAAAHH!
DON'T LOOK, RUTH! DON'T LOOK!


WHAT A HORRIBLE END! CAUGHT IN THE WATER-WHEEL!
HIS OWN DIABOLICAL RIDE FINALLY DESTROYED HIM! COME, RUTH! LET'S BUST THAT PADLOCK AND GET AWAY FROM HERE! REMEMBER? WE'VE GOT A HONEYMOON TO FINISH!
THE END

IT WAS THE MOST UNUSUAL FRATERNITY INITIATION EVER SEEN ON THE CAMPUS. . . OR ON ANY OTHER CAMPUS, FOR THAT MATTER! THE THREE PLEDGEES WERE TAKEN OUT TO THE OLD PALMER HOME ON THAT INFAMOUS NIGHT FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, AND INSTEAD OF THE PLACE BEING AMUSINGLY HAUNTED, IT TURNED INTO A---

HOUSE OF HORROR

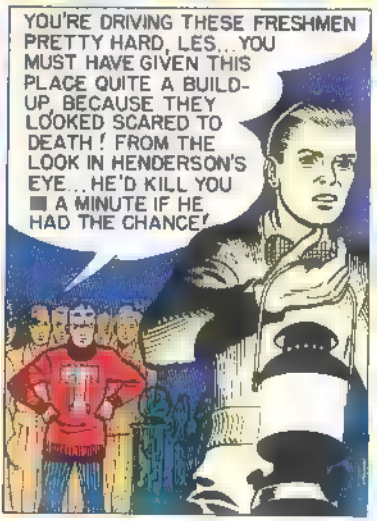
IT WAS ON A NIGHT IN 1934 THAT THIS STRANGE TALE HAD ITS BEGINNING! TODAY, FIFTEEN YEARS LATER, THERE IS STILL NO EXPLANATION FOR WHAT HAPPENED AT THE PALMER PLACE!

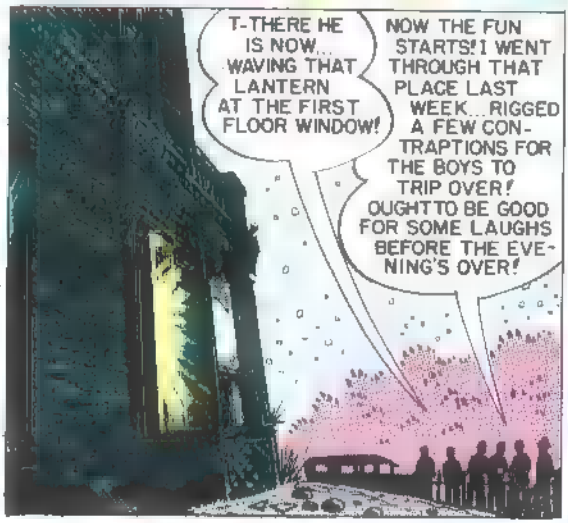

...AND AS THE LAST STEP IN YOUR HAZING, BOYS... YOU'LL HAVE TO PASS THE TEST OF COURAGE! A LONELY JOURNEY INTO THE OLD PALMER PLACE...WHICH LEGEND TELLS US IS *HAUNTED!*

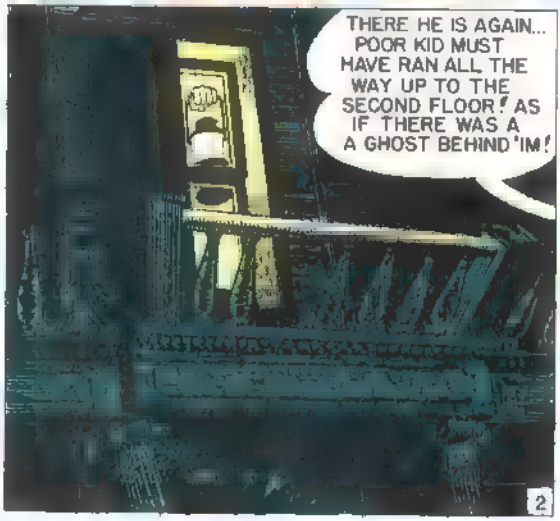
EACH ONE OF YOU WILL FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS I GAVE ON THE RIDE OUT HERE! IF ANYONE WANTS TO DROP OUT NOW...LET HIM SPEAK UP OR SHUT HIS MOUTH FOREVER! EVERYONE READY...?
Y-YES...I-I GUESS SO...

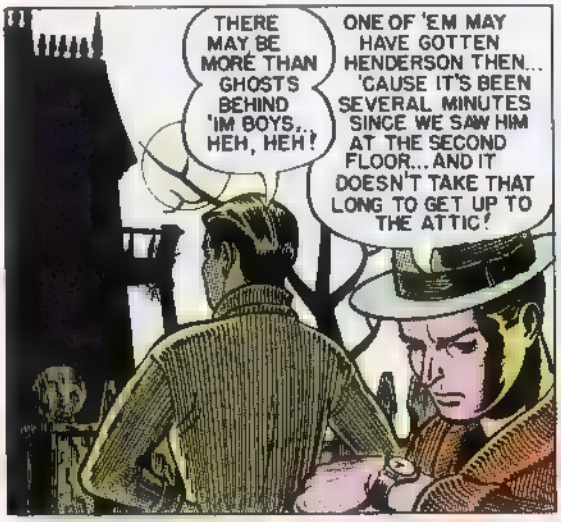
HERE'S YOUR LIGHT, HENDERSON... YOU MIGHT AS WELL START THE BALL ROLLING! AND REST ASSURED OF ONE THING, BOYS... THIS IS NO SCHOOLBOY PRANK...AS YOU'LL SOON LEARN! HEH, HEH!

WAVE THAT LANTERN AT US FROM THE FIRST AND SECOND LANDINGS, HENDERSON...AND JUST *COOL* YOUR HEELS IN THE ATTIC TILL I COME UP FOR YOU... IF YOU'RE NOT ALREADY BATHED IN *COLD* SWEAT, THAT IS!

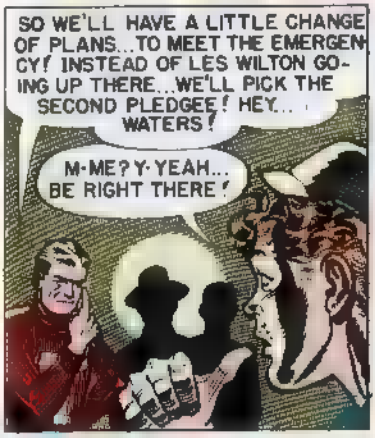

YOU'RE DRIVING THESE FRESHMEN PRETTY HARD, LES...YOU MUST HAVE GIVEN THIS PLACE QUITE A BUILD-UP, BECAUSE THEY LOOKED SCARED TO DEATH! FROM THE LOOK IN HENDERSON'S EYE...HE'D KILL YOU IN A MINUTE IF HE HAD THE CHANCE!

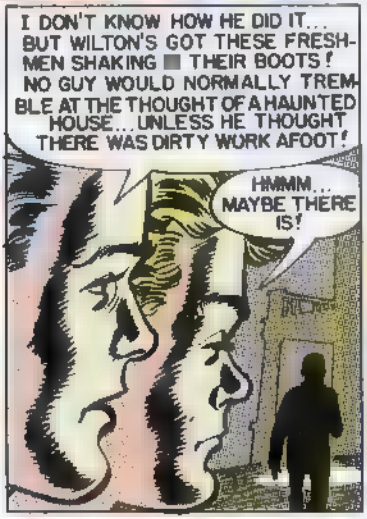

T-THERE HE IS NOW... WAVING THAT LANTERN AT THE FIRST FLOOR WINDOW!
NOW THE FUN STARTS! I WENT THROUGH THAT PLACE LAST WEEK...RIGGED A FEW CONTRAPTIONS FOR THE BOYS TO TRIP OVER! OUGHT TO BE GOOD FOR SOME LAUGHS BEFORE THE EVENING'S OVER!

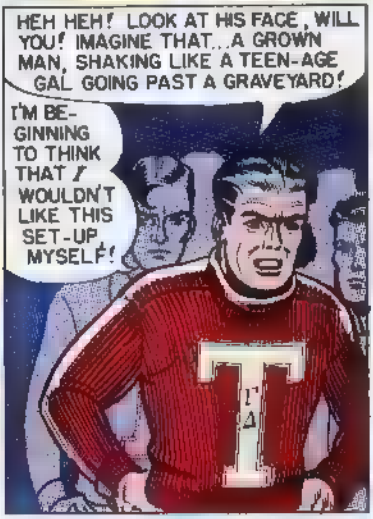

THERE HE IS AGAIN... POOR KID MUST HAVE RAN ALL THE WAY UP TO THE SECOND FLOOR! AS IF THERE WAS A A GHOST BEHIND 'IM!

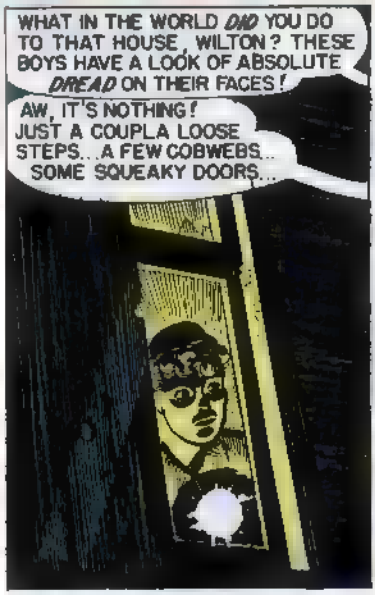

THERE MAY BE MORE THAN GHOSTS BEHIND 'IM BOYS... HEH, HEH!
ONE OF 'EM MAY HAVE GOTTEN HENDERSON THEN... 'CAUSE IT'S BEEN SEVERAL MINUTES SINCE WE SAW HIM AT THE SECOND FLOOR... AND IT DOESN'T TAKE THAT LONG TO GET UP TO THE ATTIC!

JUST A BOYISH PRANK, THAT'S ALL! THINKS HE'LL TURN THE TABLES AND SCARE *US* A BIT! PROBABLY SITTING UP THERE IN THE ATTIC, WAITING TO JUMP OUT AND YELL *BOO* AT ME WHEN I COME UP TO RELIEVE HIM!


SO WE'LL HAVE A LITTLE CHANGE OF PLANS... TO MEET THE EMERGENCY! INSTEAD OF LES WILTON GOING UP THERE... WE'LL PICK THE SECOND PLEDGEE! HEY... WATERS!
M-ME? Y-YEAH... BE RIGHT THERE!

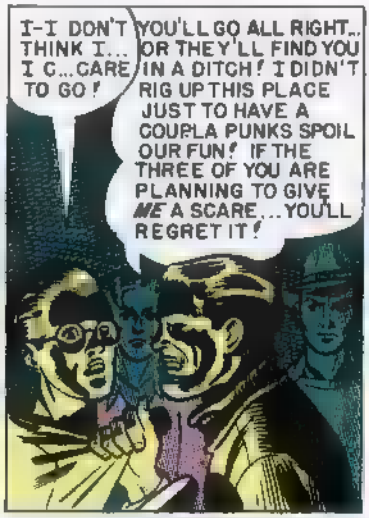

I DON'T KNOW HOW HE DID IT... BUT WILTON'S GOT THESE FRESHMEN SHAKING THEIR BOOTS! NO GUY WOULD NORMALLY TREMBLE AT THE THOUGHT OF A HAUNTED HOUSE... UNLESS HE THOUGHT THERE WAS DIRTY WORK AFOOT!
HMMM... MAYBE THERE IS!


HEH HEH! LOOK AT HIS FACE, WILL YOU! IMAGINE THAT... A GROWN MAN, SHAKING LIKE A TEEN-AGE GAL GOING PAST A GRAVEYARD!
I'M BEGINNING TO THINK THAT *I* WOULDN'T LIKE THIS SET-UP MYSELF!


WHAT IN THE WORLD *DID* YOU DO TO THAT HOUSE, WILTON? THESE BOYS HAVE A LOOK OF ABSOLUTE *DREAD* ON THEIR FACES!
AW, IT'S NOTHING! JUST A COUPLA LOOSE STEPS... A FEW COBWEBS... SOME SQUEAKY DOORS...

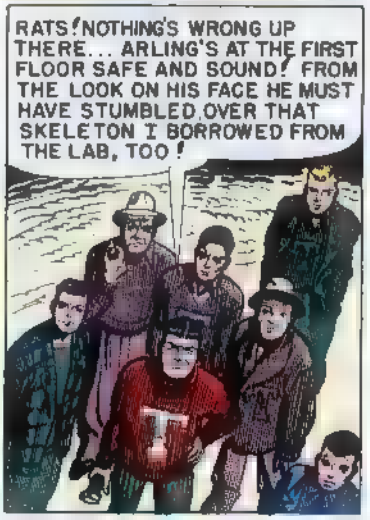
I-IT'S HAPPENED AGAIN... WATERS NEVER REACHED THAT ATTIC WINDOW! I DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THIS...
AW... THEY PROBABLY TURNED RIGHT AROUND FROM THE SECOND FLOOR... AN WE'LL FIND 'EM HIDING NEAR THE FRONT DOOR! IF THESE GUYS HAVEN'T THE GUTS TO GO UP THERE... THEN THEY'RE NOT FIT TO BE GAMMA DELTAS!

YOU... ARLING... C'MON OVER HERE! YOU'RE NEXT, MAN... GO UP TO THAT ATTIC AND TELL THOSE PALS OF YOURS TO STOP THEIR MONKEY-SHINES! THIS ■ A FRATERNITY INITATION... NOT A SCHOOLBOY PRAN■!


I-I DON'T THINK I... I C...CARE TO GO!
YOU'LL GO ALL RIGHT... OR THEY'LL FIND YOU IN A DITCH! I DIDN'T RIG UP THIS PLACE JUST TO HAVE A COUPLA PUNKS SPOIL OUR FUN! IF THE THREE OF YOU ARE PLANNING TO GIVE *ME* A SCARE... YOU'LL REGRET IT!

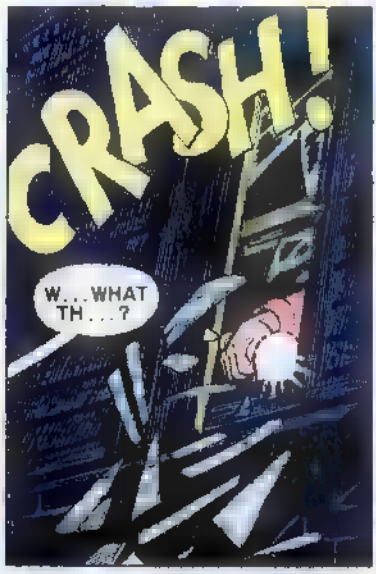
W...WE DIDN'T PLAN ANY JOKES LIKE T... THAT! AND I DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THIS... IT'S N... NOT LIKE WATERS AND HENDERSON TO FOOL AROUND! B...BUT I'LL GO!
SPOKEN LIKE A REAL GAMMA DELT- TO BE!

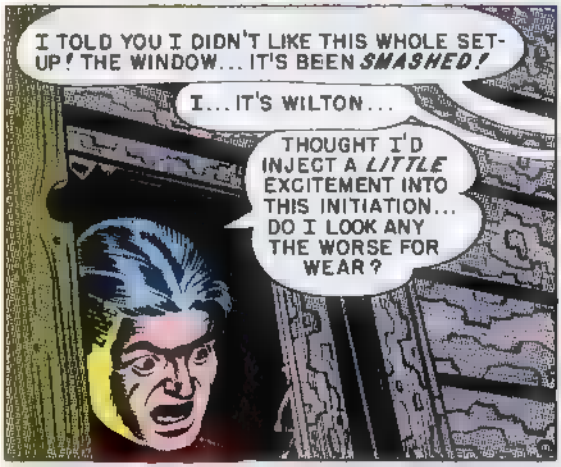
HEH, HEH! LOOK AT 'IM SHAKING! BET THE OTHER TWO'LL HAVE A BIG SURPRISE FOR ARLING... THINKING IT'S THEIR BELOVED LES WILTON!
MAYBE THE KID'S RIGHT, LES ...MAYBE SOMETHING *DID* GO WRONG UP THERE!

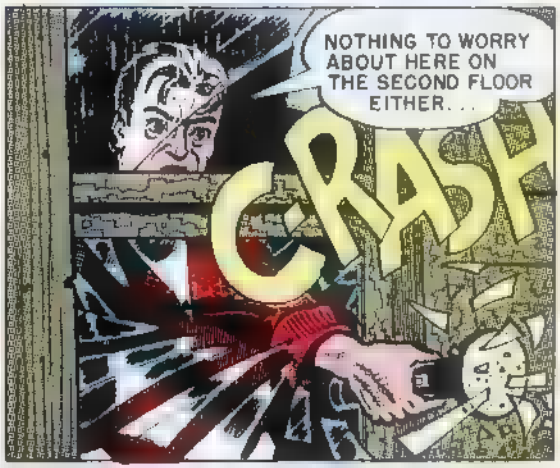

RATS! NOTHING'S WRONG UP THERE... ARLING'S AT THE FIRST FLOOR SAFE AND SOUND! FROM THE LOOK ON HIS FACE HE MUST HAVE STUMBLED OVER THAT SKELETON I BORROWED FROM THE LAB, TOO!

HE'S AT THE SECOND FLOOR...
ON HIS WAY TO THE ATTIC! HOLD YOUR BREATH, BOYS... HERE'S WHERE THE *REAL* FUN BEGINS... IN THE NEXT SIXTY SECONDS.

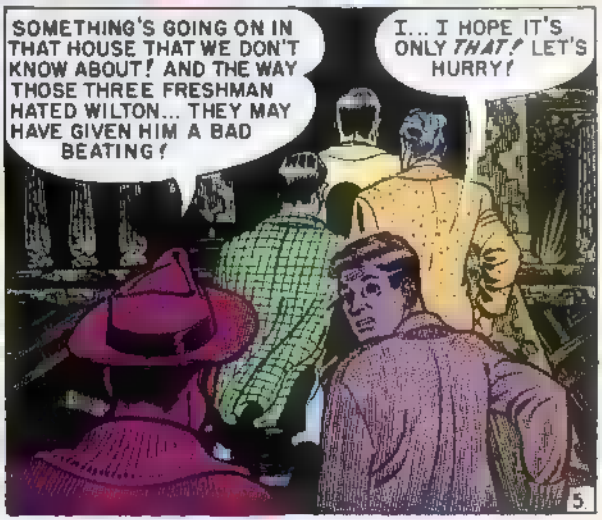
FIVE MINUTES, WILTON... AND NO SIGN OF ARLING! ALL THREE OF 'EM... *GONE!*
THE STUPID PUNKS... TOO YELLOW TO TAKE THAT LAST FLIGHT OF STEPS! I'LL SHOW 'EM *REAL* FEAR...





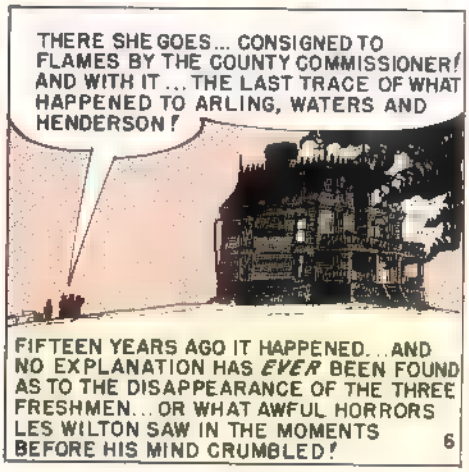


THE SECONDS TICKED BY IN THAT LONELY AREA KNOWN AS PALMER'S PLACE... SECONDS BECAME MINUTES ... AND THE MINUTES STRETCHED INTERMINABLY...



WITHIN HALF-AN-HOUR THE POLICE HAD ARRIVED AT PALMER'S PLACE... AND A THROUGH SEARCH OF THE PREMISES REVEALED ONE STARTLING FACT...

AGAIN AND AGAIN THE POLICE SEARCHED THE BUILDING THE NEXT FEW DAYS. BUT NO FURTHER INFORMA-TION WAS UNCOVER-ED... AND THEN, ABOUT A WEEK AFTER THE NIGHT OF HORROR...



THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

GREETINGS, DEAR READER! WE MEET AGAIN! REMEMBER ME? I AM *THE OLD WITCH!* IN EACH ISSUE OF THIS, THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S MAGAZINE, I BREW A *TERROR-TALE* HERE ■ MY *CAULDRON!* THIS TIME, I HAVE COOKED UP A *CHILLER-DILLER!* I CALL IT...

DEATH SUITED HIM!

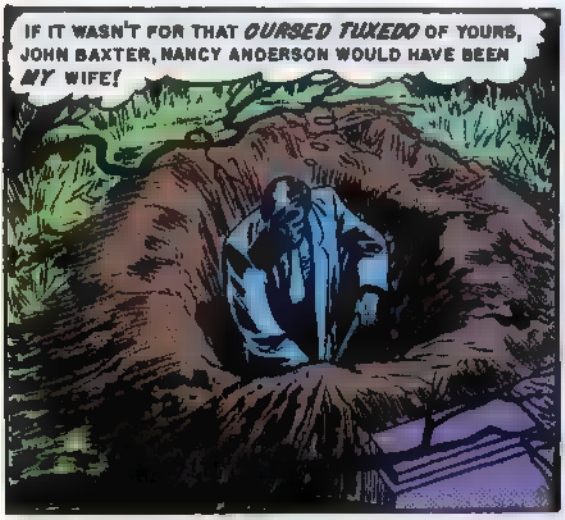
MY STORY BEGINS ON A BLACK NIGHT ■ A DESERTED GRAVEYARD! THE SOUND OF DIGGING SHATTERS THE *DEAD* SILENCE...

JUST THIS LAST TASK, JOHN BAXTER... AND THEN, TOMORROW MORNING, MY VICTORY WILL BE COMPLETE!

WILDLY, THE DARK FIGURE SPADES THE SOFT EARTH... OPENING THE EVER-WIDENING BLACK HOLE...

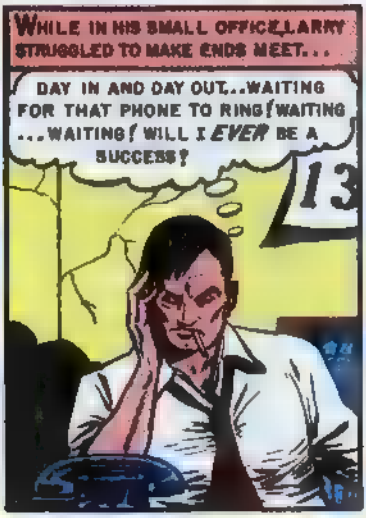
A FEW MORE FEET AND I'LL REACH YOUR COFFIN, JOHN BAXTER... AND THAT *CURSED TUXEDO!* THEN... I'LL HAVE *EVERYTHING!*

WHAT DOES THIS STRANGE FIGURE WHO DIGS AT GRAVES IN THE BLACK OF NIGHT WANT WITH BAXTER'S TUXEDO, YOU ASK? LET ME TELL YOU HIS STORY WHILE HE DIGS!
HIS NAME IS LAWRENCE CABOT! WE HAVE TO GO BACK INTO THE PAST...TO LAWRENCE CABOT'S COLLEGE DAYS... TO PICK UP HIS STORY!
HEY, CABOT! I HEAR YOU AND JOHN BAXTER ARE BOTH HOT ON NANCY ANDERSON!
CUT IT OUT, WILL YOU, DAVE?
YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO GO SOME TO GET HER, LARRY! BAXTER'S OLD MAN'S GOT DOUGH, YOU KNOW!
THAT'S JUST MY TROUBLE! I CAN'T AFFORD TO TAKE HER OUT LIKE JOHN DOES!
THAT'S THE WAY IT WAS! JOHN BAXTER AND LAWRENCE CABOT WERE BOTH IN LOVE WITH THE SAME GIRL! JOHN WAS RICH...WHILE LARRY JUST MANAGED TO SCRAPE UP ENOUGH TO GET THROUGH COLLEGE...
ALL'S FAIR IN LOVE AND WAR, LARRY, OL' BOY!
SURE, JOHN! SURE!
AND THEN THAT FATEFUL DAY ARRIVED! THE FRATERNITY THAT JOHN AND LARRY BELONGED TO WAS INVITED TO A GRADUATION DANCE, GIVEN BY NANCY ANDERSON'S SORORITY.
...AND IT'S STRICTLY FORMAL, YOU GUYS! NOBODY GOES WITHOUT A TUX!
WHA...?
S'MATTER LARRY? CAN'T YOU AFFORD ONE?
IT WAS A BAD BREAK FOR LARRY! JOHN HAD A TUXEDO, AND SO HE WENT TO THAT DANCE...WHILE LARRY STAYED BEHIND...
DARN IT! JUST MY LUCK! JOHNNY'LL PROBABLY MAKE TIME WITH NANCY TONIGHT!
BUT WHEN THE BOYS RETURNED LATE THAT NIGHT...
HEY, LARRY! CONGRATULATE ME! NANCY AND I ARE ENGAGED! WE'RE GOING TO BE MARRIED RIGHT AFTER GRADUATION!
I... I... I SEE!
2

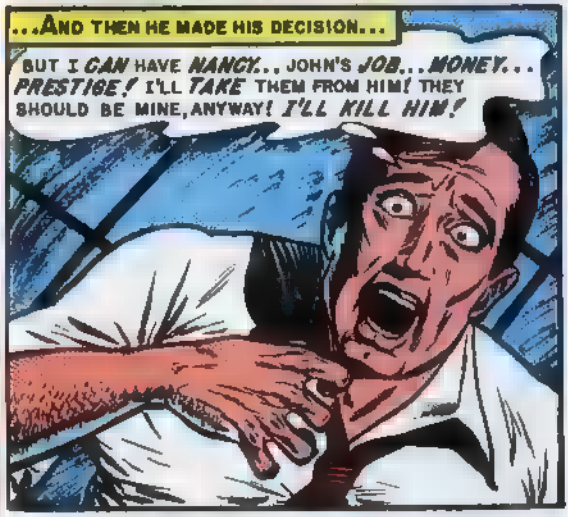

IF IT WASN'T FOR THAT *CURSED TUXEDO* OF YOURS, JOHN BAXTER, NANCY ANDERSON WOULD HAVE BEEN *MY* WIFE!

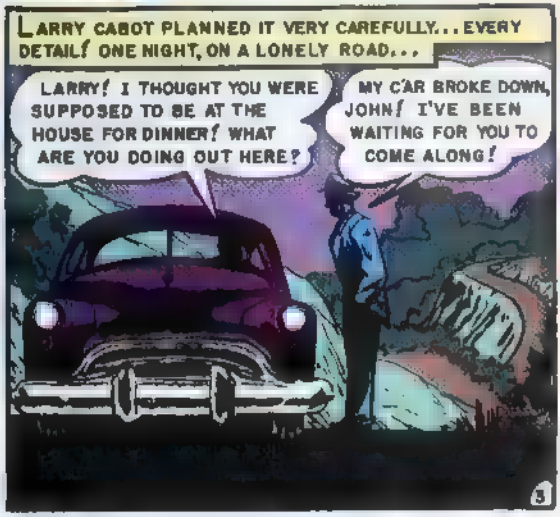
BUT...WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT, YOU ASK? LET ME CONTINUE! JOHN AND NANCY WERE MARRIED!
GO AHEAD, LARRY! KISS THE BRIDE!

NANCY'S FATHER GAVE JOHN A GOOD POSITION IN HIS FIRM, AND JOHN WAS SET...
TAKE A LETTER, MISS GLASS!
YES, MR. BAXTER!

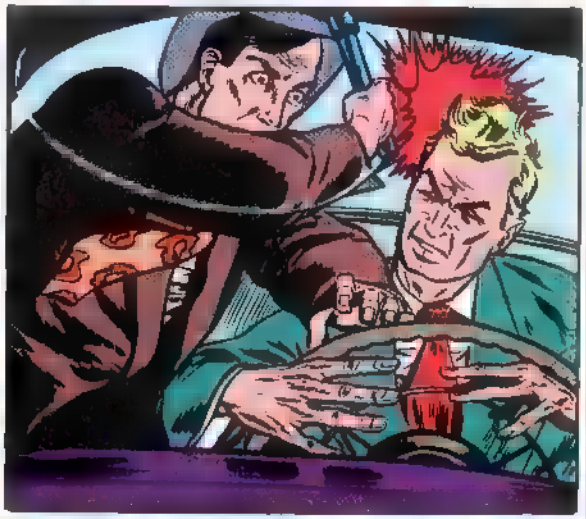

WHILE IN HIS SMALL OFFICE, LARRY STRUGGLED TO MAKE ENDS MEET...
DAY IN AND DAY OUT...WAITING FOR THAT PHONE TO RING! WAITING ...WAITING! WILL I *EVER* BE A SUCCESS?
13

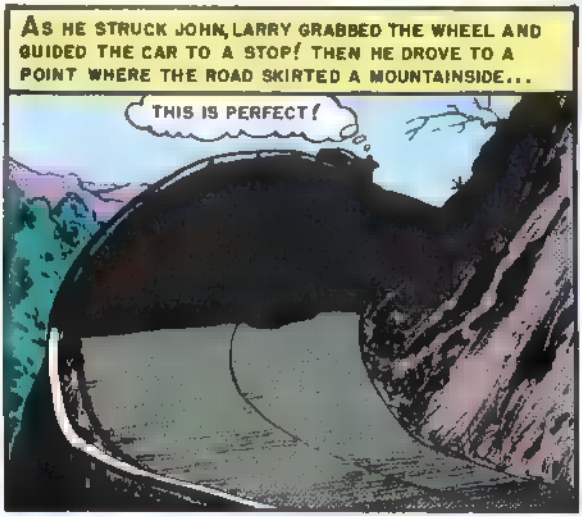
...AND BROODED...
I'D BE IN JOHN'S SHOES TODAY! *I'D* HAVE *EVERYTHING* THAT HE HAS...

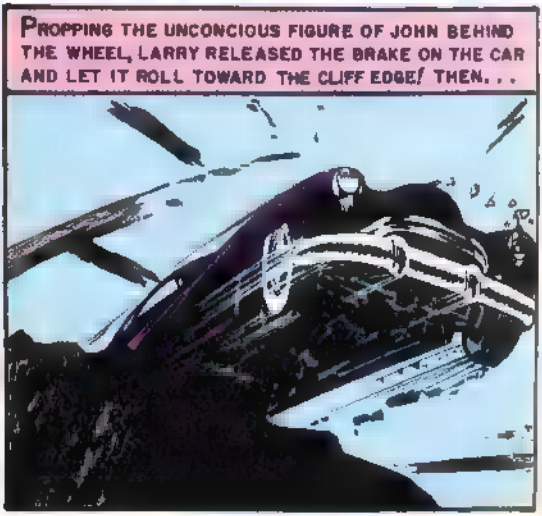

...AND THEN HE MADE HIS DECISION...
BUT I *CAN* HAVE *NANCY*... JOHN'S *JOB*... *MONEY*... *PRESTIGE!* I'LL *TAKE* THEM FROM HIM! THEY SHOULD BE MINE, ANYWAY! *I'LL KILL HIM!*


LARRY CABOT PLANNED IT VERY CAREFULLY...EVERY DETAIL! ONE NIGHT, ON A LONELY ROAD...
LARRY! I THOUGHT YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE AT THE HOUSE FOR DINNER! WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT HERE?
MY CAR BROKE DOWN, JOHN! I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU TO COME ALONG!

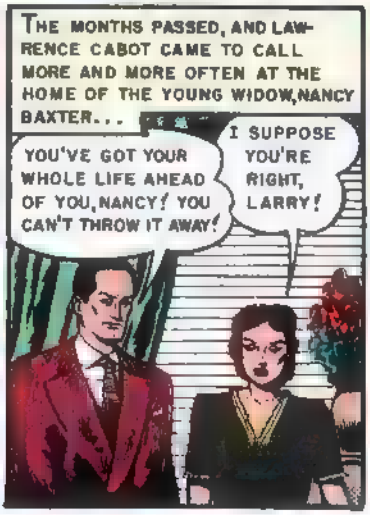
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, LARRY! NANCY WILL BE THRILLED!
YES! SHE'LL PROBABLY GET THE SHOCK OF HER LIFE!




AS HE STRUCK JOHN, LARRY GRABBED THE WHEEL AND GUIDED THE CAR TO A STOP! THEN HE DROVE TO A POINT WHERE THE ROAD SKIRTED A MOUNTAINSIDE...
THIS IS PERFECT!


PROPPING THE UNCONCIOUS FIGURE OF JOHN BEHIND THE WHEEL, LARRY RELEASED THE BRAKE ON THE CAR AND LET IT ROLL TOWARD THE CLIFF EDGE! THEN...

THEY CALLED IT AN ACCIDENT! LARRY'S PLAN HAD WORKED PERFECTLY! AT THE FUNERAL, HE COMFORTED THE GRIEF-STRICKEN NANCY.
CHIN UP, NANCY! HE WOULD HAVE WANTED IT THAT WAY.
SOB... SOB...


THE MONTHS PASSED, AND LAWRENCE CABOT CAME TO CALL MORE AND MORE OFTEN AT THE HOME OF THE YOUNG WIDOW, NANCY BAXTER...
YOU'VE GOT YOUR WHOLE LIFE AHEAD OF YOU, NANCY! YOU CAN'T THROW IT AWAY!
I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT, LARRY!

AND THEN... ONE EVENING...
NANCY! YOU KNOW HOW I'VE FELT ABOUT YOU... EVER SINCE COLLEGE!
YOU'RE SWEET, LARRY!

MARRY ME, NANCY! LET ME TAKE JOHN'S PLACE! I LOVE YOU!
I'VE ALWAYS LIKED YOU LARRY...

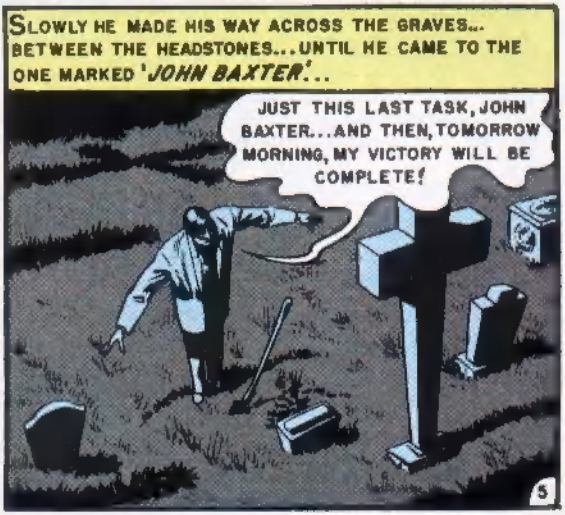
THEN SAY 'YES'... SAY 'YES'!
ALL RIGHT, LARRY! I'LL MARRY YOU!

AND SO, LARRY HAD GOTTEN WHAT HE WANTED! NANCY WAS GOING TO BE HIS WIFE! IN HIS ROOM, THE NIGHT BEFORE THE WEDDING...
HA-HA! I'VE WON AT LAST, JOHN BAXTER! I'VE WON AT LAST!

I'VE GOT IT ALL! EVERYTHING I WOULD HAVE GOTTEN IF IT WASN'T FOR THAT TUXEDO YOU HAD WHEN WE WERE IN COLLEGE! BUT NOW I... I...

YOUR TUXEDO! THAT WOULD CROWN MY VICTORY! TOMORROW WHEN I MARRY NANCY, I'LL WEAR YOUR TUXEDO...THE ONE THEY BURIED YOU IN!

THE GATES TO THE CEMETERY CREAKED OPEN, AND LARRY... HIS EYES WIDE AND STARING... ENTERED! HE CARRIED A SPADE...

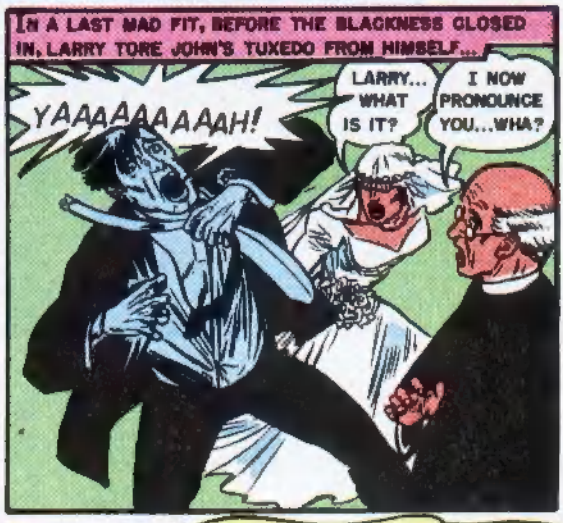

SLOWLY HE MADE HIS WAY ACROSS THE GRAVES... BETWEEN THE HEADSTONES...UNTIL HE CAME TO THE ONE MARKED 'JOHN BAXTER'...
JUST THIS LAST TASK, JOHN BAXTER...AND THEN, TOMORROW MORNING, MY VICTORY WILL BE COMPLETE!

AND THAT IS LAWRENCE CABOT'S STORY...SO FAR! WAIT! HEAR THAT HOLLOW BOOM? THE COFFIN! LET'S SEE WHAT HE'S UP TO...
HAH! NOW TO OPEN YOUR CASKET AND STRIP YOU OF YOUR LAST POSSESSION, JOHN BAXTER!
H-M-M-M! FOUR MONTHS IN THE GROUND HASN'T HARMED IT ANY! IT'S STILL IN GOOD CONDITION!
LARRY CABOT REMOVED THE TUXEDO FROM THE CORPSE OF JOHN BAXTER AND RE-COVERED THE GRAVE! THEN...
...AND NOW FOR SOME SLEEP! TOMORROW IS A BIG DAY!
YOU THINK HE'S MAD, DON'T YOU? WELL, YOU MAY BE RIGHT! IN ANY CASE, THE NEXT MORNING LARRY DRESSED IN JOHN'S TUXEDO...
YES, JOHN! IT FITS FINE! I FIT INTO EVERYTHING OF YOURS...FINE! HA-HA!
THE CHURCH WAS HOT! AND AS LARRY STOOD IN THE VESTRY, WAITING FOR THE CEREMONY TO BEGIN...
WHEW! IT'S CERTAINLY HOT IN HERE THIS MORNING! I...I...FEEL...STRANGE...
SOON THE FAMILIAR STRAINS OF THE WEDDING MARCH ECHOED THROUGH THE VAULTED ROOM...
IT...MUST BE MY...IMAGINATION...BUT I FEEL... AS THOUGH... THIS SUIT... WERE CRUSHING ME!
6

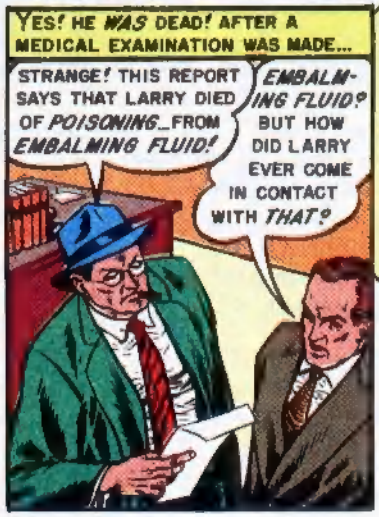
NANCY MADE HER APPEARANCE AND STARTED DOWN THE LONG AISLE...
H..HURRY! I..I...CAN'T BREATHE! I...I DON'T...THINK I CAN...LAST THROUGH...THE...CEREMONY!

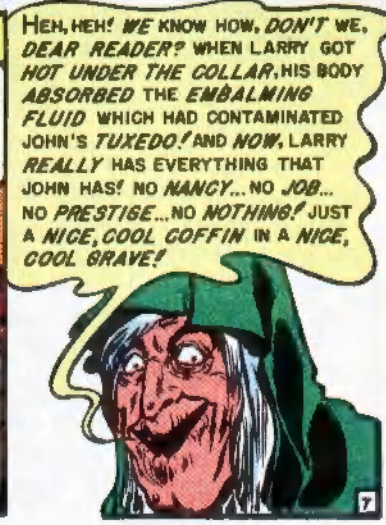
LARRY'S BRAIN WAS REELING! EVERYTHING SWAM BEFORE HIM! AS HE STEPPED FORWARD...
CRUSHING...THE LIFE OUT...OF ME...HOT...CAN'T BREATHE!
WE ARE GATHERED TOGETHER TO WITNESS THE...

THERE WERE FLASHES, NOW...THEN A DIZZINESS...
...LET HIM SPEAK NOW, OR FOREVER HOLD HIS PEACE...
JOHN...HE...HE'S CRUSHING ME...KILLING ME! I...I...


IN A LAST MAD FIT, BEFORE THE BLACKNESS CLOSED IN, LARRY TORE JOHN'S TUXEDO FROM HIMSELF...
YAAAAAAAAAH!
LARRY... WHAT IS IT?
I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU...WHA?

THE GROUP THAT HAD COME TO WITNESS THE WEDDING WAS SHOCKED! SOMEONE RUSHED FORWARD TO EXAMINE THE PROSTRATE LARRY...
HE...HE'S DEAD!
DEAD?


YES! HE WAS DEAD! AFTER A MEDICAL EXAMINATION WAS MADE...
STRANGE! THIS REPORT SAYS THAT LARRY DIED OF POISONING_FROM EMBALMING FLUID!
EMBALMING FLUID? BUT HOW DID LARRY EVER COME IN CONTACT WITH THAT?


HEH, HEH! WE KNOW HOW, DON'T WE, DEAR READER? WHEN LARRY GOT HOT UNDER THE COLLAR, HIS BODY ABSORBED THE EMBALMING FLUID WHICH HAD CONTAMINATED JOHN'S TUXEDO! AND NOW, LARRY REALLY HAS EVERYTHING THAT JOHN HAS! NO NANCY...NO JOB... NO PRESTIGE...NO NOTHING! JUST A NICE, COOL COFFIN IN A NICE, COOL GRAVE!

STRANGE TALES FROM THE CRYPT